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SUBJECT: SERBIA: REFUGEE COORDINATOR WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT:
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AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH UNHCR SERBIA REPRESENTATIVE

¶1. (SBU) On February 6 the Ambassador met with UNHCR Representative in Serbia Lennart Kotsalainen to discuss UNHCR humanitarian response and preparedness in case of population movements from Kosovo into Serbia. Kotsalainen said that signals from Kosovo thus far have been good. He added that the GOS had been consistent in its message to Kosovo Serbs that they should remain in Kosovo but worried that the current calm situation could unravel quickly if the political instability in Serbia continued. "The measures taken here could play a role in how things develop inside Kosovo," he said. Though he did not believe a humanitarian crisis was imminent, and he did not expect significant movement in the first month following Kosovo declaration of independence, Kotsalainen told the Ambassador that it will be important to keep a close eye on developments six months down the line. One potential problem he foresaw related to whether Kosovo Serbs stay or leave was the length of time Kosovo Prime Minister Thagi's government would accept parallel institutions in an independent Kosovo.

¶2. (SBU) Kotsalainen said UNHCR enjoyed a close working relationship with PRM and will continue to stay in close touch in the coming months. He said he was not clear however on how UNHCR could make use of the USAID-SCOPES funding mechanism would kick in and how UNHCR could make use of SCOPES funding in case of an emergency. The USAID Serbia Contingency Planning and Economic Security Program (SCOPES) helps businesses grow in order to provide employment opportunities to vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons. SCOPES also works with municipalities across Serbia to become more resilient and better cope with crises and natural disasters. The funding mechanism is not set up to provide direct monetary contributions to UNHCR or any other international organizations in the event of a humanitarian crisis. Rather, a portion of funding would be channeled as in-kind support via SCOPES implementing partners, based on a needs assessment from UNHCR, as the situation warrants. USAID officer in charge for SCOPES Walter Doetsch has clarified the mechanism with UNHCR.

INTEGRATING INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN SERBIA

¶3. (SBU) Kotsalainen told the Ambassador that it will be important to integrate the 206,144 IDPs from Kosovo in Serbia once the Kosovo situation is resolved. He said the GOS will have to accept the reality that most of these individuals will not return to an independent Kosovo. He added that UNHCR is working closely with Serbia's Commissioner for Refugees on a targeted plan to close the 62 remaining collective centers across Serbia and find housing solutions for the approximately 4,500 IDPs who live in them.

UNHCR ORGANIZES KEY PARTNERS WORKSHOP ON KOSOVO PREPAREDNESS

14. (SBU) On February 7, UNHCR organized a half-day closed workshop on Kosovo emergency preparedness. Newly arrived Senior Emergency Officer Andrei Kazakov led the session. Participants included UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, IOM, and ICRC, as well as the Serbian Red Cross, CRS, DRC, and DAI (SCOPES implementing partner.) Bora Tajic, Head of Returns at the Kosovo Ministry's Coordination Center for Kosovo was the only government representative present. His participation signals the likelihood that the Ministry for Kosovo will have a central role to play in the event of population movements.

15. (SBU) Donors were not invited to the session, as UNHCR felt participation would impact the dynamics of the discussion, and could potentially limit information sharing by GOS representatives. Representatives from DAI, DRC, and CRS said it was overall a well-structured and organized session. According to Deputy Director of DAI-SCOPES Michael Pillsbury, UNHCR had expanded upon its plans for operation centers and deployment of teams. He said the basic structure would include an inter-agency coordination center in Belgrade, three field offices in Kraljevo (existing), Vranje and Novi Pazar (both out of UNDP offices), and twelve field-office based mobile teams, which would be deployed according to workload to boundary gates.

SERBIA'S READMISSION AGREEMENTS WITH THE EU

16. (SBU) On February 8, the Center for Cultural Decontamination, a local NGO and Le courier de la Serbie, a newly launched francophone news outlet organized a conference on readmission, minorities, and cultural diversity in Serbia. Director of the Serbian EU Integration Office Tanja Miscevic said that Serbia's May 16, 2007 Agreement on Readmission with the EU replaced all previously signed and ratified bilateral agreements with EU countries.

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17. (SBU) Miscevic explained that from the legal standpoint, an illegal migrant is any one or combination of the following: a failed asylum seeker originating from Serbia, an individual with an expired work or visit permission originating from Serbia, or a third country failed asylum seeker for whom Serbia was the country of the first asylum.

18. (SBU) According to Miscevic, there are 1.5 million illegal migrants currently living across Europe who could be repatriated to Serbia. This was the first time record had heard this figure and called on Assistant Minister for Labor Bojan Andjelkovic for clarification. He told record his estimate is closer to 150,000. The imprecision stems partly from the lack of information from EU governments, who themselves do not have good estimates.

19. (SBU) Miscevic said that since January 1, 2008, when the readmission agreement entered into force, signatory countries have identified 52 illegal migrants for repatriation.

BELGRADE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB TO TARGET CHARITABLE GIVING TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

10. (U) Refcord was guest speaker at the Belgrade International Women's Club February 9 monthly meeting. The group raises approximately \$100,000 per year through a variety of fundraisers and wants to develop a targeted strategy for giving to vulnerable populations, particularly IDPs. The group has provided in-kind donations of food and non-food items to an unofficial collective center in Grocka on the outskirts of Belgrade for the past nine years. They are now considering diversifying their giving to include a wider cross-section of IDPs. Refcord will introduce the group to local NGOs who can provide practical advice on how to channel their assistance to reach the greatest number of beneficiaries.

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